

## **We reject the arbitrary bidding order for Canal 1: an affront to freedom of expression, press, and enterprise that undermines democracy**

**Bogotá D.C., August 20, 2025.** The Instituto de Ciencia Política (ICP) expresses its **deep concern and categorical rejection** of President Gustavo Petro's recent instruction to the Minister of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to initiate the bidding process for Canal 1. This measure, ordered during a cabinet meeting, was announced despite the fact that the current concession, held by Plural Comunicaciones SAS, remains **legally valid until 2037**.

At the ICP, we view this action as an **outrage and a complete breach of the rule of law**. A concession contract, like other television licenses, cannot be unilaterally and discretionary terminated by the administrative authority; it requires a declaration of contractual breach through a duly substantiated administrative process. Taking decisions outside the framework of due process would violate the principle of legality and the acquired rights of Canal 1, exposing the State to multimillion-dollar rulings and causing serious financial harm to public assets.

The presidential decision, lacking clear legal justification and accompanied by insinuations of alleged "irregularities" in the contract, constitutes an attempt to **"expropriate"** and a **direct attack on press freedom and media pluralism**. The liberal democracy we defend guarantees fundamental rights such as **freedom of expression and press freedom**, which are constitutionally protected and which the national government is required to respect. This presidential measure therefore undermines **legal certainty and freedom of enterprise**, cornerstones when fostering citizen autonomy and attracting investment.

This issue is part of a **systematic political persecution against the media**. The president has **attacked and stigmatized them** by labeling them as enemies of the people, which weakens democratic deliberation. Canal 1 has become the target of this government onslaught.

The problem is aggravated by the **repeated intervention of state agencies** such as the Ministry of Labor, the Superintendency of Industry and Commerce (SIC), and the Superintendency of Companies. Although these entities should exercise legitimate regulatory control, their actions have gone beyond this scope, taking the shape of **attempts to intimidate the channel's editorial independence.**

The constant pressure, even though the Superintendency of Companies found no corporate subordination relationships, affects the autonomy of the media and creates a climate of uncertainty that undermines confidence in the rule of law, **as the government's unilateral actions set a dangerous precedent by disregarding established legal processes, which erodes institutional stability and investor confidence.**

Since March of this year, the Instituto de Ciencia Política has alerted the **Spanish Senate's Ibero-American Affairs Committee** to the serious situation at Canal 1, requesting that it address the case and express its concern about actions that threaten freedom of expression and enterprise in Colombia.

**In light of this authoritarian measure, the ICP will lead efforts to raise international awareness of this government abuse,** bringing it to various political and academic organizations in Latin America, the United States, and Europe with which we have relationships. We will highlight that this decision represents yet another action by the current government to weaken liberal democracy, erode the rule of law, and affect press freedom.

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